

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF REGISTRATION IN MEDICINE

POLICY 92-001

(Adopted July 22, 1992)
(Amended December 2, 1992)
(Amended November 20, 1996)

ISSUANCE OF PRESS RELEASES ON FINAL DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The Board of Registration in Medicine's paramount purpose is to protect the public health, safety and welfare. The Board's mission is twofold: to ensure that only qualified physicians are licensed to practice medicine, and to support an environment which maximizes the high quality of health care in the Commonwealth. The Board considers a critical part of this mandate the responsibility to inform the public of physicians against whose licenses it has taken disciplinary action. At the same time, the Board is cognizant of its responsibility not to harm a practitioner's reputation in an unwarranted fashion as a result of broadcast of Board disciplinary action. In seeking to balance these concerns, the Board has adopted the following policy of informing the press about its final disciplinary actions.

1. The Board will inform the press about final disciplinary actions in which a Statement of Allegations has been issued when it imposes the following sanctions: revocation, suspension, fine, reprimand, censure, community service, continuing education and probation. Resignations while under investigation are final disciplinary actions and will be included in press notifications. The Board will report an order of summary suspension only at the time of the initial Board vote.
2. The Board will not issue a press release in cases in which the physician is disciplined or placed on probation for actions related solely to the physician's alcohol, chemical or mental impairment, where no violations of criminal law or actual patient harm have occurred, and where the Board action does not involve time out of practice. The Board will not issue a press release on an Assurance of Discontinuance. Assurances of Discontinuance are usually entered to address the practitioner's alcohol, chemical or mental impairment.
3. For ease of use by the press, the Board will report these final disciplinary actions to the press in a simple press release format that will state the findings and sanction, and provide some information about the practitioner's residence, specialty, and location of privileges. The press release will not diverge significantly from the language found in the decision.
4. The Executive Director will review all press releases prior to release.